A Tear and a Smile

Kahlil Gibran

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THE CREATION

The God separated a spirit from Himself and fashioned it into Beauty. He showered upon her all the blessings of gracefulness and kindness. He gave her the cup of happiness and said, "Drink not from this cup unless you forget the past and the future, for happiness is naught but the moment." And He also gave her a cup of sorrow and said, "Drink from this cup and you will understand the meaning of the fleeting instants of the joy of life,

for sorrow ever abounds."

And the God bestowed upon her a love that would desert he forever upon her first sigh of earthly satisfaction, and a sweetness that would vanish with her first awareness of flattery.

And He gave her wisdom from heaven to lead to the all−righteous path, and placed in the depth of her heart and eye that sees the unseen, and created in he an affection and goodness toward all things. He dressed her with raiment of hopes spun by the angels of heaven from the sinews of the rainbow. And He cloaked her in the shadow of confusion, which is the dawn of life and light.

Then the God took consuming fire from the furnace of anger, and searing wind from the desert of ignorance, and sharp−cutting sands from the shore of selfishness, and coarse earth from under the feet of ages, and combined them all and fashioned Man. He gave to Man a blind power that rages and drives him into a madness which extinguishes only before gratification of desire, and placed life in him which is the spectre of death.

And the god laughed and cried. He felt an overwhelming love and pity for Man, and sheltered him beneath His guidance.

TWO INFANTS

A prince stood on the balcony of his palace addressing a great multitude summoned for the occasion and said, "Let me offer you and this whole fortunate country my congratulations upon the birth of a new prince who will carry the name of my noble family, and of whom you will be justly proud. He is the new bearer of a great and illustrious ancestry, and upon him depends the brilliant future of this realm. Sing and be merry!" The voices of the throngs, full of joy and thankfulness, flooded the sky with exhilarating song, welcoming the new tyrant who would affix the yoke of oppression to their necks by ruling the weak with bitter authority, and exploiting their bodies and killing their souls. For that destiny, the people were singing and drinking ecstatically to the heady of the new Emir.

Another child entered life and that kingdom at the same time. While the crowds were glorifying the strong and belittling themselves by singing praise to a potential despot, and while the angels of heaven were weeping over the people's weakness and servitude, a sick woman was thinking. She lived in an old, deserted hovel and, lying in her hard bed beside her newly born infant wrapped with ragged swaddles, was starving to death. She was a penurious and miserable young wife neglected by humanity; her husband had fallen into the trap of death set by the prince's oppression, leaving a solitary woman to whom God had sent, that night, a tiny companion to prevent her from working and sustaining life.

As the mass dispersed and silence was restored to the vicinity, the wretched woman placed the infant on her lap and looked into his face and wept as if she were to baptize him with tears. And with a hunger weakened voice she spoke to the child saying, "Why have you left the spiritual world and come to share with me the bitterness of earthly life? Why have you deserted the angels and the spacious firmament and come to this miserable land of humans, filled with agony, oppression, and heartlessness? I have nothing to give you except tears; will you be nourished on tears instead of milk? I have no silk clothes to put on you; will my naked, shivering arms give you warmth? The little animals graze in the pasture and return safely to their shed; and the small birds pick the seeds and sleep placidly between the branches. But you, my beloved, have naught save a loving but destitute mother."

Then she took the infant to her withered breast and clasped her arms around him as if wanting to join the two bodies in one, as before. She lifted her burning eyes slowly toward heaven and cried, "God! Have mercy on

my unfortunate countrymen!"

At that moment the clouds floated from the face of the moon, whose beams penetrated the transom of that poor home and fell upon two corpses.

THE HOUSE OF FORTUNE

My wearied heart bade me farewell and left for the House of Fortune. As he reached that holy city which the soul had blessed and worshipped, he commenced wondering, for he could not find what he had always imagined would be there. The city was empty of power, money, and authority.

And my heart spoke to the daughter of Love saying, "Oh Love, where can I find Contentment? I heard that she had come here to join you."

And the daughter of Love responded, "Contentment has already gone to preach her gospel in the city, where greed and corruption are paramount; we are not in need of her."

Fortune craves not Contentment, for it is an earthly hope, and its desires are embraced by union with objects, while Contentment is naught but heartfelt.

The eternal soul is never contented; it ever seeks exaltation. Then my heart looked upon Life of Beauty and said: "Thou art all knowledge; enlighten me as to the mystery of Woman." And he answered, "Oh human heart, woman is your own reflection, and whatever you are, she is; wherever you live, she lives; she is like religion if not interpreted by the ignorant, and like a moon, if not veiled with clouds, and like a breeze, if not poisoned with impurities."

And my heart walked toward Knowledge, the daughter of Love and Beauty, and said, "Bestow upon me wisdom, that I might share it with the people." And she responded, "Say not wisdom, but rather fortune, for real fortune comes not from outside, but begins in the Holy of Holies of life. Share of thyself with the people."

A POET'S DEATH IS HIS LIFE

The dark wings of night enfolded the city upon which Nature had spread a pure white garment of snow; and men deserted the streets for their houses in search of warmth, while the north wind probed in contemplation of laying waste the gardens. There in the suburb stood an old hut heavily laden with snow and on the verge of falling. In a dark recess of that hovel was a poor bed in which a dying youth was lying, staring at the dim light of his oil lamp, made to flicker by the entering winds. He a man in the spring of life who foresaw fully that the peaceful hour of freeing himself from the clutches of life was fast nearing. He was awaiting Death's visit gratefully, and upon his pale face appeared the dawn of hope; and on his lops a sorrowful smile; and in his eyes forgiveness.

He was poet perishing from hunger in the city of living rich. He was placed in the earthly world to enliven the heart of man with his beautiful and profound sayings. He as noble soul, sent by the Goddess of Understanding to soothe and make gentle the human spirit. But alas! He gladly bade the cold earth farewell without receiving a smile from its strange occupants.

He was breathing his last and had no one at his bedside save the oil lamp, his only companion, and some parchments upon which he had inscribed his heart's feeling. As he salvaged the remnants of his withering strength he lifted his hands heavenward; he moved his eyes hopelessly, as if wanting to penetrate the ceiling in order to see the stars from behind the veil clouds.

And he said, "Come, oh beautiful Death; my soul is longing for you. Come close to me and unfasten the irons life, for I am weary of dragging them. Come, oh sweet Death, and deliver me from my neighbours who looked upon me as a stranger because I interpret to them the language of the angels. Hurry, oh peaceful Death, and carry me from these multitudes who left me in the dark corner of oblivion because I do not bleed the weak as they do. Come, oh gentle Death, and enfold me under your white wings, for my fellowmen are not in want of me. Embrace me, oh Death, full of love and mercy; let your lips touch my lips which never tasted a mother's kiss, not touched a sister's cheeks, not caresses a sweetheart's fingertips. Come and take me, by beloved Death."

Then, at the bedside of the dying poet appeared an angel who possessed a supernatural and divine beauty, holding in her hand a wreath of lilies. She embraced him and closed his eyes so he could see no more, except with the eye of his spirit. She impressed a deep and long and gently withdrawn kiss that left and eternal smile of fulfilment upon his lips. Then the hovel became empty and nothing was lest save parchments and papers which the poet had strewn with bitter futility.

Hundreds of years later, when the people of the city arose from the diseases slumber of ignorance and saw the dawn of knowledge, they erected a monument in the most beautiful garden of the city and celebrated a feast every year in honour of that poet, whose writings had freed them. Oh, how cruel is man's ignorance!

THE CRIMINAL

A young man of strong body, weakened by hunger, sat on the walker's portion of the street stretching his hand toward all who passed, begging and repeating his hand toward all who passed, begging and repeating the sad song of his defeat in life, while suffering from hunger and from humiliation.

When night came, his lips and tongue were parched, while his hand was still as empty as his stomach.

He gathered himself and went out from the city, where he sat under a tree and wept bitterly. Then he lifted his puzzled eyes to heaven while hunger was eating his inside, and he said, "Oh Lord, I went to the rich man and asked for employment, but he turned me away because of my shabbiness; I knocked at the school door, but was forbidden solace because I was empty−handed; I sought any occupation that would give me bread, but all to no avail. In desperation I asked alms, but They worshippers saw me and said "He is strong and lazy, and he should not beg."

"Oh Lord, it is Thy will that my mother gave birth unto me, and now the earth offers me back to You before the Ending."

His expression then changed. He arose and his eyes now glittered in determination. He fashioned a thick and heavy stick from the branch of the tree, and pointed it toward the city, shouting, "I asked for bread with all the strength of my voice, and was refused. Not I shall obtain it by the strength of my muscles! I asked for bread in the name of mercy and love, but humanity did not heed. I shall take it now in the name of evil!"

The passing years rendered the youth a robber, killer and destroyer of souls; he crushed all who opposed him; he amassed fabulous wealth with which he won himself over to those in power. He was admired by colleagues, envied by other thieves, and feared by the multitudes.

His riches and false position prevailed upon the Emir to appoint him deputy in that city−−the sad process pursued by unwise governors. Thefts were then legalized; oppression was supported by authority; crushing of the weak became commonplace; the throngs curried and praised.

Thus does the first touch of humanity's selfishness make criminals of the humble, and make killers of the sons of peace; thus does the early greed of humanity grow and strike back at humanity a thousand fold!

SONG OF FORTUNE

Man and I are sweethearts He craves me and I long for him, But alas! Between us has appeared a rival who brings us misery. She is cruel and demanding, Possessing empty lure. Her name is Substance. She follows wherever we go And watches like a sentinel, Bringing restlessness to my lover.

I ask for my beloved in the forest, Under the trees, by the lakes. I cannot find him, For Substance has spirited him to the clamorous city And placed him on the throne Of quaking, metal riches.

I call for him with the voice of knowledge And the song of Wisdom. He does not hearken, For Substance has enticed him into the dungeon Of selfishness, where avarice dwells.

I seek him in the field of Contentment, But I am alone, For my rival has imprisoned him , I the cave of gluttony and greed, And locked him there With painful chains of gold.

I call to him at dawn, when Nature smiles, But he does not hear, For excess has laden his drugged eyes with sick slumber.

I beguile him at eventide, when Silence rules And the flowers sleep. But he responds not, For his fear over what the morrow will bring shadows his thoughts.

He yearns to love me; He asks for me in this own acts. But he will find me not except in God's acts. He seeks me in the edifices of his glory Which he has built upon the bones of others; He whispers to me from among his heaps of gold and silver; But he will find me only by coming to the house of Simplicity Which God has built at the brink of the stream of affection.

He desires to kiss me before his coffers, But his lips will never touch mine, Except in the richness of the pure breeze.

He asks me to share with him his fabulous wealth, But I will not forsake God's fortune; I will not cast off my cloak of beauty.

He seeks deceit for medium; I seek only the medium of his heart. He bruises his heart in his narrow cell; I would enrich his heart with all my love.

My beloved has learned how to shriek and cry for my enemy, Substance; I would teach him how to shed tears of affection And mercy from the eyes of his soul For all things, And utter sighs of contentment through those tears.

Man is my sweetheart; I want to belong to him.

SONG OF THE RAIN

I am dotted silver threads dropped from heaven by the gods. Nature then takes me, to adorn her fields and valleys.

I am beautiful pearls, Plucked from the crown of Ishtar by the daughter of Dawn to embellish the gardens.

When I cry the hills laugh; When I humble myself the flowers rejoice; When I bow, all things are elated.

The field and the cloud are lovers And between them I am a messenger of mercy. I quench the thirst of one; I cure the ailment of the other.

The voice of thunder declares my arrival; The rainbow announces my departure. I am like earthly life, Which begins at the feet of the mad elements And ends under the upraised wings of death.

I emerge from the heard of the sea Soar with the breeze. When I see a field in need, I descend and embrace the flowers and the trees in a million little ways.

I touch gently at the windows with my soft fingers, And my announcement is a welcome song all can hear But only the sensitive can understand.

The heat in the air gives birth to me, But in turn I kill it, As woman overcomes man with the strength she takes from him.

I am the sigh of the sea; The laughter of the field; The tears of heaven.

So with love−−Sighs from the deep sea of affection; Laughter from the colourful field of the spirit; Tears from the endless heaven of memories.

THE POET

He is a link between this and the coming world. He is a pure spring from which all thirsty souls may drink.

He is a tree watered by the River of Beauty, Bearing fruit which the hungry heart craves;

He is a nightingale, Soothing the depressed spirit with his beautiful melodies; He is a white cloud appearing over the horizon, Ascending and growing until it fills the face of the sky. Then it falls on the flows in the field of Life, Opening their petals to admit the light.

He is an angel, Sent by the goddess to preach the Deity's gospel; He is a brilliant lamp, Unconquered by darkness And inextinguishable by the wind. It is filled with oil by Ihstar of Love, And lighted by Apollon of Music.

He is a solitary figure, Robed in simplicity and kindness; He sits upon the lap of Nature to draw his inspiration, And stays up in the silence of the night, Awaiting the descending of the spirit.

He is a sower Who sows the seeds of his heart in the prairies of affection, And humanity reaps the harvest for her nourishment.

This is the poet−−whom the people ignore in this life, And who is recognized only when he bids the earthly world farewell And returns to his arbour in heaven.

This is the poet−−who asks naught of humanity but a smile. This is the poet−−whose spirit ascends and fills the firmament with beautiful sayings; Yet the people deny themselves his radiance.

Until when shall the people remain asleep? Until when shall they continue to glorify those who attain greatness by moments of advantage? How long shall they ignore those who enable them to see the beauty of

their spirit, Symbol of peace and love? Until when shall human beings honour the dead and forget the living, Who spend their lives encircled in misery, And who consume themselves, Like burning candles to illuminate the way For the ignorant and lead them into the path of light?

Poet, you are the life of this life, And you have triumphed over the ages of despite their severity.

Poet, you will one day rule the hearts, And therefore, your kingdom has no ending.

Poet, examine your crown of thorns; You will find concealed in it a budding wreath of laurel.

LAUGHTER AND TEARS

As the Sun withdrew his rays from the garden, and the moon threw cushioned beams upon the flowers, I sat under the trees pondering upon the phenomena of the atmosphere, looking through the branches at the strewn stars which glittered like chips of silver upon a blue carpet; and I could hear from a distance the agitated murmur of the rivulet singing its way briskly into the valley.

When the birds took shelter among the boughs, and the flowers folded their petals, and tremendous silence descended, I heard a rustle of feet though the grass. I took heed and saw a young couple approaching my arbour. The say under a tree where I could see them without being seen.

After he looked about in every direction, I heard the young man saying, "Sit by me, my beloved, and listen to my heart; smile, for your happiness is a symbol of our future; be merry, for the sparkling days rejoice with us.

"My soul is warning me of the doubt in your heart, for doubt in love is a sin. "Soon you will be the owner of this vast land, lighted by this beautiful moon; soon you will be the mistress of my palace, and all the servants and maids will obey your commands.

"Smile, my beloved, like the gold smiles from my father's coffers.

"My heart refuses to deny you its secret. Twelve months of comfort and travel await us; for a year we will spend my father's gold at the blue lakes of Switzerland, and viewing the edifices of Italy and Egypt, and resting under the Holy Cedars of Lebanon; you will meet the princesses who will envy you for your jewels and clothes.

"All these things I will do for you; will you be satisfied?"

In a little while I saw them walking and stepping on flowers as the rich step upon the hearts of the poor. As they disappeared from my sight, I commenced to make comparison between love and money, and to analyze their position in the heart.

Money! The source of insincere love; the spring of false light and fortune; the well of poisoned water; the desperation of old age!

I was still wandering in the vast desert of contemplation when a forlorn and spectre−like couple passed by me and sat on the grass; a young man and a young woman who had left their farming shacks in the nearby fields for this cool and solitary place.

After a few moments of complete silence, I heard the following words uttered with sighs from weather−bitten lips, "Shed not tears, my beloved; love that opens our eyes and enslaves our hearts can give us the blessing of

patience. Be consoled in our delay our delay, for we have taken an oath and entered Love's shrine; for our love will ever grow in adversity; for it is in Love's name that we are suffering the obstacles of poverty and the sharpness of misery and the emptiness of separation. I shall attack these hardships until I triumph and place in your hands a strength that will help over all things to complete the journey of life.

"Love−−which is God−−will consider our sighs and tears as incense burned at His altar and He will reward us with fortitude. Good−bye, my beloved; I must leave before the heartening moon vanishes."

A pure voice, combined of the consuming flame of love, and the hopeless bitterness of longing and the resolved sweetness of patience, said, "Good−bye, my beloved."

They separated, and the elegy to their union was smothered by the wails of my crying heart.

I looked upon slumbering Nature, and with deep reflection discovered the reality of a vast and infinite thing −−something no power could demand, influence acquire, nor riches purchase. Nor could it be effaced by the tears of time or deadened by sorrow; a thing which cannot be discovered by the blue lakes of Switzerland or the beautiful edifices of Italy.

It is something that gathers strength with patience, grows despite obstacles, warms in winter, flourishes in spring, casts a breeze in summer, and bears fruit in autumn −−I found Love.

VISION

There in the middle of the field, by the side of a crystalline stream, I saw a bird−cage whose rods and hinges were fashioned by an expert's hands. In one corner lay a dead bird, and in another were two basins −−one empty of water and the other of seeds. I stood there reverently, as if the lifeless bird and the murmur of the water were worthy of deep silence and respect −−something worth of examination and meditation by the heard and conscience.

As I engrossed myself in view and thought, I found that the poor creature had died of thirst beside a stream of water, and of hunger in the midst of a rich field, cradle of life; like a rich man locked inside his iron safe, perishing from hunger amid heaps of gold.

Before my eyes I saw the cage turned suddenly into a human skeleton, and the dead bird into a man's heart which was bleeding from a deep wound that looked like the lips of a sorrowing woman. A voice came from that wound saying, "I am the human heart, prisoner of substance and victim of earthly laws.

"In God's field of Beauty, at the edge of the stream of life, I was imprisoned in the cage of laws made by man.

"In the centre of beautiful Creation I died neglected because I was kept from enjoying the freedom of God's bounty.

"Everything of beauty that awakens my love and desire is a disgrace, according to man's conceptions; everything of goodness that I crave is but naught, according to his judgment.

"I am the lost human heart, imprisoned in the foul dungeon of man's dictates, tied with chains of earthly authority, dead and forgotten by laughing humanity whose tongue is tied and whose eyes are empty of visible tears."

All these words I heard, and I saw them emerging with a stream of ever thinning blood from that wounded

heart.

More was said, but my misted eyes and crying should prevented further sight or hearing.

TWO WISHES

In the silence of the night Death descended from God toward the earth. He hovered above a city and pierced the dwellings with his eyes. He say the spirits floating on wings of dreams, and the people who were surrendered to the Slumber.

When the moon fell below the horizon and the city became black, Death walked silently among the houses −−careful to touch nothing −−until he reached a palace. He entered through the bolted gates undisturbed, and stood by the rich man's bed; and as Death touched his forehead, the sleeper's eyes opened, showing great fright.

When he saw the spectre, he summoned a voice mingled with fear and anger, and said, "God away, oh horrible dream; leave me, you dreadful ghost. Who are you? How did you enter this place? What do you want? Leave this place at once, for I am the lord of the house and will call my slaves and guards, and order them to kill you!"

Then Death spoke, softly but with smouldering thunder, "I am Death. Stand and bow!"

The man responded, "What do you want? What have you come here when I have not yet finished my affairs? What see you from strength such as mine? Go to the weak man, and take him away!

"I loathe the sight of your bloody paws and hollow face, and my eyes take sick at your horrible ribbed winds and cadaverous body."

After a moment of fearful realization he added, "No, No, oh merciful Death! Mind not talk, for even fear reveals what the heart forbids.

"Take a bushelful of my gold, or a handful of my slave's souls, but leave me. I have accounts with Life requiring settling; I have due from people much gold; my ships have not reached the harbour; my demand, but spare my life. Death, I own harems of supernatural beauty; your choice is my gift to you. Give heed, Death −−I have but one child, and I love him dearly for he is my only joy in this life. I offer supreme sacrifice −−take him, but spare me!"

Death murmured, "You are not rich, but pitifully poor." Then Death took the hand of that earthly slave, removed his reality, and gave to the angels the heavy task of correction.

And Death walked slowly amidst the dwellings of the poor until he reached the most miserable he could find. He entered and approached a bed upon which a youth slept fitfully. Death touched his eyes; the lad sprang up as he saw Death standing by, and, with a voice full of love and hope he said, "Here I am, my beautiful Death. Accept my soul, for you are the hope of my dreams. Be their accomplishment! Embrace me, oh beloved Death! You are merciful; do not leave me. You are God's messenger; deliver me to Him. You are the right hand of Truth and the heart of Kindness; do not neglect me.

"I have begged for you many times, but you did not come; I have sought you, but you avoided me; I called out to you, but you listened not. You hear me now −−embrace my soul, beloved Death!"

Death placed his softened hand upon the trembling lips, removed all reality, and enfolded it beneath his wings for secure conduct. And returning to the sky, Death looked back and whispered his warning:

"Only those return to Eternity. Who on earth seek out Eternity."

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The gold−hoarder walked in his palace park and with him walked his troubles. And over his head hovered worries as a vulture hovers over a carcass, until he reached a beautiful lake surrounded by magnificent marble statuary.

He sat there pondering the water which poured from the mouths of the statues like thoughts flowing freely from a lover's imagination, and contemplating heavily his palace which stood upon a knoll like a birth−mark upon the cheek of a maiden. His fancy revealed to him the pages of his life's drama which he read with falling tears that veiled his eyes and prevented him from viewing man's feeble additions to Nature.

He looked back with piercing regret to the images of his early life, woven into pattern by the gods, until he could no longer control his anguish. He said aloud, "Yesterday I was grazing my sheep in the green valley, enjoying my existence, sounding my flute, and holding my head high. Today I am a prisoner of greed. Gold leads into gold, then into restlessness and finally into crushing misery.

"Yesterday I was like a singing bird, soaring freely here and there in the fields. Today I am a slave to fickle wealth, society's rules, and city's customs, and purchased friends, pleasing the people by conforming to the strange and narrow laws of man. I was born to be free and enjoy the bounty of life, but I find myself like a beast of burden so heavily laden with gold that his back is breaking.

"Where are the spacious plains, the singing brooks, the pure breeze, the closeness of Nature? Where is my deity? I have lost all! Naught remains save loneliness that saddens me, gold that ridicules me, slaves who curse to my back, and a palace that I have erected as a tomb for my happiness, and in whose greatness I have lost my heart.

"Yesterday I roamed the prairies and the hills together with the Bedouin's daughter; Virtue was our companion, Love our delight, and the moon our guardian. Today I am among women with shallow beauty who sell themselves for gold and diamonds.

"Yesterday I was carefree, sharing with the shepherds all the joy of life; eating, playing, working, singing, and dancing together to the music of the heart's truth. Today I find myself among the people like a frightened lamb among the wolves. As I walk in the roads, they gaze at me with hateful eyes and point at me with scorn and jealousy, and as I steal through the park I see frowning faces all about me.

"Yesterday I was rich in happiness and today I am poor in gold.

"Yesterday I was a happy shepherd looking upon his head as a merciful king looks with pleasure upon his contented subjects. Today I am a slave standing before my wealth, my wealth which robbed me of the beauty of life I once knew.

"Forgive me, my Judge! I did not know that riches would put my life in fragments and lead me into the dungeons of harshness and stupidity. What I thought was glory is naught but an eternal inferno."

He gathered himself wearily and walked slowly toward the palace, sighing and repeating, "Is this what people

call wealth? Is this the god I am serving and worshipping? Is this what I seek of the earth? Why can I not trade it for one particle of contentment? Who would sell me one beautiful thought for a ton of gold? Who would give me one moment of love for a handful of gems? Who would grant me an eye that can see others' hearts, and take all my coffers in barter?"

As he reached the palace gates he turned and looked toward the city as Jeremiah gazed toward Jerusalem. He raised his arms in woeful lament and shouted, "Oh people of the noisome city, who are living in darkness, hastening toward misery, preaching falsehood, and speaking with stupidity...until when shall you remain ignorant? Unit when shall you abide in the filth of life and continue to desert its gardens? Why wear you tattered robes of narrowness while the silk raiment of Nature's beauty is fashioned for you? The lamp of wisdom is dimming; it is time to furnish it with oil. The house of true fortune is being destroyed; it is time to rebuild it and guard it. The thieves of ignorance have stolen the treasure of your peace; it is time to retake it!"

At that moment a poor man stood before him and stretched forth his hand for alms. As he looked at the beggar, his lips parted, his eyes brightened with a softness, and his face radiated kindness. It was as if the yesterday he had lamented by the lake had come to greet him. He embraced the pauper with affection and filled his hands with gold, and with a voice sincere with the sweetness of love he said, "Come back tomorrow and bring with you your fellow sufferers. All your possessions will be restored."

He entered his palace saying, "Everything in life is good; even gold, for it teaches a lesson. Money is like a stringed instrument; he who does not know how to use it properly will hear only discordant music. Money is like love; it kills slowly and painfully the one who withholds it, and it enlivens the other who turns it upon his fellow man."

LEAVE ME, MY BLAMER

Leave me, my blamer, For the sake of the love which unites your soul with that of your beloved one; For the sake of that which joins spirit with mothers affection, And ties your heart with filial love. Go, and leave me to my own weeping heart.

Let me sail in the ocean of my dreams; Wait until Tomorrow comes, For tomorrow is free to do with me as he wishes. Your laying is naught but shadow That walks with the spirit to the tomb of abashment, And shows heard the cold, solid earth.

I have a little heart within me And I like to bring him out of his prison and carry him on the palm of my hand To examine him In depth and extract his secret. Aim not your arrows at him, Lest he takes fright and vanish 'ere he pours the secret blood As a sacrifice at the altar of his own faith, Given him by Deity When he fashioned him of love and beauty.

The sun is rising and the nightingale Is singing, And the myrtle is breathing its fragrance into space. I want to free myself from the quilted slumber of wrong. Do not detain me, my blamer!

Cavil me not by mention of the lions of the forest Or the snakes of the valley, For me soul knows no fear of earth And accepts no warning of evil before evil comes.

Advise me not, my blamer, For calamities have opened my heart And tears have cleansed my eyes, And errors have taught me the language of the hearts.

Talk not of banishment, for conscience is my judge And he will justify me and protect me if I am innocent, And will deny me of life if I am a criminal.

Love's procession is moving; Beauty is waving her banner; Youth is sounding the trumpet of joy; Disturb not my contrition, my blamer. Let me walk, for the path is rich with roses and mint, And the air is scented with cleanliness.

Relate not the tales of wealth and greatness, For my soul is rich with bounty and great with God's glory.

Speak not of peoples and laws and kingdoms, For the whole earth is my birthplace And all humans are my brothers.

Go from me, for you are taking away life−−Giving repentance and bringing needless words.

THE BEAUTY OF DEATH

Part One−−The Calling

Let me sleep, for my soul is intoxicated with love and Let me rest, for my spirit has had its bounty of days and nights; Light the candles and burn the incense around my bed, and Scatter leaves of jasmine and roses over my body; Embalm my hair with frankincense and sprinkle my feet with perfume, And read what the hand of Death has written on my forehead.

Let me rest in the arms of Slumber, for my open eyes are tired; Let the silver−stringed lyre quiver and soothe my spirit; Weave from the harp and lute a veil around my withering heart.

Sing of the past as you behold the dawn of hope in my eyes, for It's magic meaning is a soft bed upon which my heart rests.

Dry your tears, my friends, and raise your heads as the flowers Raise their crowns to greet the dawn. Look at the bride of Death standing like a column of light Between my bed and the infinite; Hold your breath and listen with me to the beckoning rustle of her white wings.

Come close and bid me farewell; Touch my eyes with smiling lips. Let the children grasp my hands with soft and rosy fingers; Let the ages place their veined hands upon my head and bless me; Let the virgins come close and see the shadow of God in my eyes, And hear the echo of His will racing with my breath.

Part Two−−The Ascending

I have passed a mountain peak And my soul is soaring in the firmament of complete and unbound freedom; I am far, far away, my companions, And the clouds are hiding the hills from my eyes. The valleys are becoming flooded with an ocean of silence, And the hands of oblivion are engulfing the roads and the houses; The prairies and fields are disappearing behind a white spectre That looks like the spring cloud, yellow as the candlelight And red as the twilight.

The songs of the waves and the hymns of the streams are scattered, And the voices of the throngs reduced to silence; And I can hear naught but the music of Eternity In exact harmony with the spirit's desires. I am cloaked in full whiteness; I am in comfort; I am in peace.

Part Three−−The Remains

Unwrap me from this white linen shroud And clothe me with leaves of jasmine and lilies; Take my body from the ivory casket and let it rest Upon pillows of orange blossoms. Lament me not, but sing songs of youth and

joy; Shed not tears upon me, but sing of harvest and the winepress; Utter no sigh of agony, But draw upon my face with your finger the symbol of Love and Joy. Disturb not the air's tranquillity with chanting and requiems, But let your hearts sing with me the song of Eternal Life; Mourn me not with apparel of black, But dress in colour and rejoice with me; Talk not of my departure with sighs in your hearts; Close your eyes and you will see me with you forevermore.

Place me upon clusters of leaves And carry my upon your friendly shoulders And walk slowly to the deserted forest. Take me not to the crowded burying ground Lest my slumber be disrupted by the rattling of bones and skulls. Carry me to the cypress woods And dig my grave where violets and poppies grow not in the other's shadow; Let my grave be deep So that the flood will not carry my bones to the open valley; Let my grace be wide, So that the twilight shadows will come and sit by me.

Take from me all earthly raiment And place me deep in my Mother Earth; And place me with care upon my mother's breast. Cover me with soft earth, And let each handful be mixed with seeds of jasmine, lilies and myrtle; And when they grow above me, And thrive on my body's element they will breathe the fragrance of my heart into space; And reveal even to the sun the secret of my peace; And sail with the breeze and comfort the wayfarer.

Leave me then, friends−−leave me and depart on mute feet, As the silence walks in the deserted valley; Leave me to God and disperse yourselves slowly, As the almond and apple blossoms disperse under the vibration of Nisan's breeze. Go back to the joy of your dwellings And you will find there that which Death cannot remove from you and me. Leave with place, for what you see here is far away in meaning From the earthly world. Leave me.

A POET'S VOICE

Part One

The power of charity sows deep in my heart, and I reap and gather the wheat in bundles and give them to the hungry.

My soul gives life to the grapevine and I press its bunches and give the juice to the thirsty.

Heaven fills my lamp with oil and I place it at my window to direct the stranger through the dark.

I do all these things because I live in them; and if destiny should tie my hands and prevent me from so doing, then death would be my only desire. For I am a poet, and if I cannot give, I shall refuse to receive.

Humanity rages like a tempest, but I sigh in silence for I know the storm must pass away while a sigh goes to God.

Human kinds cling to earthly things, but I seek ever to embrace the torch of love so it will purify me by its fire and sear inhumanity from my heart.

Substantial things deaden a man without suffering; love awakens him with enlivening pains.

Humans are divided into different clans and tribes, and belong to countries and towns. But I find myself a stranger to all communities and belong to no settlement. The universe is my country and the human family is my tribe.

Men are weak, and it is sad that they divide amongst themselves. The world is narrow and it is unwise to cleave it into kingdoms, empires, and provinces.

Human kinds unite themselves one to destroy the temples of the soul, and they join hands to build edifices for earthly bodies. I stand alone listening to the voice of hope in my deep self saying, "As love enlivens a man's heart with pain, so ignorance teaches him the way of knowledge." Pain and ignorance lead to great joy and knowledge because the Supreme Being has created nothing vain under the sun.

Part Two

I have a yearning for my beautiful country, and I love its people because of their misery. But if my people rose, stimulated by plunder and motivated by what they call "patriotic spirit" to murder, and invaded my neighbour's country, then upon the committing of any human atrocity I would hate my people and my country.

I sing the praise of my birthplace and long to see the home of my children; but if the people in that home refused to shelter and feed the needy wayfarer, I would convert my praise into anger and my longing to forgetfulness. My inner voice would say, "The house that does not comfort the need is worthy of naught by destruction."

I love my native village with some of my love for my country; and I love my country with part of my love for the earth, all of which is my country; and I love the earth will all of myself because it is the haven of humanity, the manifest spirit of God.

Humanity is the spirit of the Supreme Being on earth, and that humanity is standing amidst ruins, hiding its nakedness behind tattered rags, shedding tears upon hollow cheeks, and calling for its children with pitiful voice. But the children are busy singing their clan's anthem; they are busy sharpening the swords and cannot hear the cry of their mothers.

Humanity appeals to its people but they listen not. Were one to listen, and console a mother by wiping her tears, other would say, "He is weak, affected by sentiment."

Humanity is the spirit of the Supreme Being on earth, and that Supreme Being preaches love and good−will. But the people ridicule such teachings. The Nazarene Jesus listened, and crucifixion was his lot; Socrates heard the voice and followed it, and he too fell victim in body. The followers of The Nazarene and Socrates are the followers of Deity, and since people will not kill them, they deride them, saying, "Ridicule is more bitter than killing."

Jerusalem could not kill The Nazarene, nor Athens Socrates; they are living yet and shall live eternally. Ridicule cannot triumph over the followers of Deity. They live and grow forever.

Part Three

Thou art my brother because you are a human, and we both are sons of one Holy Spirit; we are equal and made of the same earth.

You are here as my companion along the path of life, and my aid in understanding the meaning of hidden Truth. You are a human, and, that fact sufficing, I love you as a brother. You may speak of me as you choose, for Tomorrow shall take you away and will use your talk as evidence for his judgment, and you shall receive justice.

You may deprive me of whatever I possess, for my greed instigated the amassing of wealth and you are entitled to my lot if it will satisfy you.

You may do unto me whatever you wish, but you shall not be able to touch my Truth.

You may shed my blood and burn my body, but you cannot kill or hurt my spirit.

You may tie my hands with chains and my feet with shackles, and put me in the dark prison, but who shall not enslave my thinking, for it is free, like the breeze in the spacious sky.

You are my brother and I love you. I love you worshipping in your church, kneeling in your temple, and praying in your mosque. You and I and all are children of one religion, for the varied paths of religion are but the fingers of the loving hand of the Supreme Being, extended to all, offering completeness of spirit to all, anxious to receive all.

I love you for your Truth, derived from your knowledge; that Truth which I cannot see because of my ignorance. But I respect it as a divine thing, for it is the deed of the spirit. Your Truth shall meet my Truth in the coming world and blend together like the fragrance of flowers and becoming one whole and eternal Truth, perpetuating and living in the eternity of Love and Beauty.

I love you because you are weak before the strong oppressor, and poor before the greedy rich. For these reasons I shed tears and comfort you; and from behind my tears I see you embraced in the arms of Justice, smiling and forgiving your persecutors. You are my brother and I love you.

Part Four

You are my brother, but why are you quarrelling with me? Why do you invade my country and try to subjugate me for the sake of pleasing those who are seeking glory and authority?

Why do you leave your wife and children and follow Death to the distant land for the sake of those who buy glory with your blood, and high honour with your mother's tears?

Is it an honour for a man to kill his brother man? If you deem it an honour, let it be an act of worship, and erect a temple to Cain who slew his brother Abel.

Is self−preservation the first law of Nature? Why, then, does Greed urge you to self−sacrifice in order only to achieve his aim in hurting your brothers? Beware, my brother, of the leader who says, "Love of existence obliges us to deprive the people of their rights!" I say unto you but this: protecting others' rights is the noblest and most beautiful human act; if my existence requires that I kill others, then death is more honourable to me, and if I cannot find someone to kill me for the protection of my honour, I will not hesitate to take my life by my own hands for the sake of Eternity before Eternity comes.

Selfishness, my brother, is the cause of blind superiority, and superiority creates clanship, and clanship creates authority which leads to discord and subjugation.

The soul believes in the power of knowledge and justice over dark ignorance; it denies the authority that supplies the swords to defend and strengthen ignorance and oppression−−that authority which destroyed Babylon and shook the foundation of Jerusalem and left Rome in ruins. It is that which made people call criminals great mean; made writers respect their names; made historians relate the stories of their inhumanity in manner of praise.

The only authority I obey is the knowledge of guarding and acquiescing in the Natural Law of Justice.

What justice does authority display when it kills the killer? When it imprisons the robber? When it descends on a neighbourhood country and slays its people? What does justice think of the authority under which a killer punishes the one who kills, and a thief sentences the one who steals?

You are my brother, and I love you; and Love is justice with its full intensity and dignity. If justice did not support my love for you, regardless of your tribe and community, I would be a deceiver concealing the ugliness of selfishness behind the outer garment of pure love.

Conclusion

My soul is my friend who consoles me in misery and distress of life. He who does not befriend his soul is an enemy of humanity, and he who does not find human guidance within himself will perish desperately. Life emerges from within, and derives not from environs.

I came to say a word and I shall say it now. But if death prevents its uttering, it will be said by Tomorrow, for Tomorrow never leaves a secret in the book of Eternity.

I came to live in the glory of Love and the light of Beauty, which are the reflections of God. I am here living, and the people are unable to exile me from the domain of life for they know I will live in death. If they pluck my eyes I will hearken to the murmurs of Love and the songs of Beauty.

If they close my ears I will enjoy the touch of the breeze mixed with the incense of Love and the fragrance of Beauty.

If they place me in a vacuum, I will live together with my soul, the child of Love and Beauty.

I came here to be for all and with all, and what I do today in my solitude will be echoed by Tomorrow to the people.

What I say now with one heart will be said tomorrow by many hearts.

THE LIFE OF LOVE

Spring

Come, my beloved; let us walk amidst the knolls, For the snow is water, And life is alive from its slumber and is roaming the hills and valleys. Let us follow the footprints of Spring into the distant fields, And mount the hilltops to draw inspiration high above the cool green plains.

Dawn of Spring has unfolded her winter−kept garment And placed it on the peach and citrus trees; And they appear as brides in the ceremonial custom of the Night of Kedre.

The sprigs of grapevine embrace each other like sweethearts, And the brooks burst out in dance between the rocks, Repeating the song of joy; And the flowers bud suddenly from the heart of nature, Like foam from the rich heart of the sea.

Come, my beloved; let us drink the last of Winter's tears from the cupped lilies, And soothe our spirits with the shower of notes from the birds, And wander in exhilaration through the intoxicating breeze.

Let us sit by that rock, where violets hide; Let us pursue their exchange of the sweetness of kisses.

Summer

Let us go into the fields, my beloved, For the time of harvest approaches, And the sun's eyes are ripening the grain. Let us tend the fruit of the earth, As the spirit nourishes the grains of joy from the seeds of Love, sowed deep in our hearts. Let us fill our bins with the products of nature, As life fills so abundantly the domain of our hearts with her endless bounty. Let us make the flowers our bed, And the sky our blanket, And rest our heads together upon pillows of soft hay. Let us relax after the day's toil, and listen to the provoking murmur of the brook.

Autumn

Let us go and gather grapes in the vineyard for the winepress, And keep the wine in old vases, As the spirit keeps Knowledge of the ages in eternal vessels.

Let us return to our dwelling, For the wind has caused the yellow leaves to fall And shroud the withering flowers that whisper elegy to Summer. Come home, my eternal sweetheart, For the birds have made pilgrimage to warmth And lest the chilled prairies suffering pangs of solitude. The jasmine and myrtle have no more tears.

Let us retreat, for the tired brook has ceased its song; And the bubblesome springs are drained of their copious weeping; And their cautious old hills have stored away their colourful garments.

Come, my beloved; Nature is justly weary And is bidding her enthusiasm farewell With quiet and contented melody.

Winter

Come close to me, oh companion of my full life; Come close to me and let not Winter's touch enter between us. Sit by me before the hearth, For fire is the only fruit of Winter.

Speak to me of the glory of your heart, For that is greater than the shrieking elements beyond our door. Bind the door and seal the transoms, For the angry countenance of the heaven depresses my spirit, And the face of our snow−laden fields makes my soul cry.

Feed the lamp with oil and let it not dim, And place it by you, So I can read with tears what your life with me has written upon your face.

Bring Autumn's wine. Let us drink and sing the song of remembrance to Spring's carefree sowing, And Summer's watchful tending, And Autumn's reward in harvest.

Come close to me, oh beloved of my soul; The fire is cooling and fleeing under the ashes. Embrace me, for I fear loneliness; The lamp is dim, and the wine which we pressed is closing our eyes. Let us look upon each other before they are shut. Find me with your arms and embrace me; Let slumber then embrace our souls as one. Kiss me, my beloved, for Winter has stolen all but our moving lips.

You are close by me, my Forever. How deep and wide will be the ocean of Slumber, And how recent was the dawn!

SONG OF THE WAVE

The strong shore is my beloved And I am his sweetheart. We are at last united by love, And then the moon draws me from him. I go to him in haste and depart Reluctantly, with many little farewells.

I steal swiftly from behind the blue horizon, To cast the silver of my foam upon the gold of his sand, And we blend in melted brilliance.

I quench his thirst and submerge his heart; He softens my voice and subdues my temper. At dawn I recite the rules of love upon his ears, And he embraces me longingly.

At eventide I sing to him the song of hope, And then print smooth kisses upon his face; I am swift and fearful, but he is quiet, patient, and thoughtful. His broad bosom soothes my restlessness.

As the tide comes we caress each other, When it withdraws, I drop to his feet in prayer.

Many times have I danced around mermaids As they rose from the depths And rested upon my crest to watch the stars; Many times have I heard lovers complain of their smallness, And I helped them to sigh.

Many times have I teased the great rocks And fondled them with a smile, But never have I received laughter from them; Many times have I lifted drowning souls And carried them tenderly to my beloved shore. He gives them strength as he takes mine.

Many times have I stolen gems from the depths And presented them to my beloved shore. He takes them in silence, But still I give for he welcomes me ever.

In the heaviness of night, When all creatures seek the ghost of slumber, I sit up, singing at one time and sighing at another. I am awake always.

Alas! Sleeplessness has weakened me! But I am a lover, and the truth of love is strong. I may be weary, but I shall never die.

PEACE

The tempest calmed after bending the branches of the trees and leaning heavily upon the grain in the field. The stars appeared as broken remnants of lightning, but now silence prevailed over all, as if Nature's war had never been fought.

At that hour a young woman entered her chamber and knelt by her bed sobbing bitterly. Her heart flamed with agony but she could finally open her lips and say, "Oh Lord, bring him home safely to me. I have exhausted my tears and can offer no more, oh Lord, full of love and mercy. My patience is drained and calamity is seeking possession of my heart. Save him, oh Lord, from the iron paws of War; deliver him from such unmerciful Death, for he is weak, governed by the strong. Oh Lord, save my beloved, who is Thine own son, from the foe, who is Thy foe. Keep him from the forced pathway to Death's door; let him see me, or come and take me to him."

Quietly a young man entered. His head was wrapped in bandage soaked with escaping life.

He approached he with a greeting of tears and laughter, then took her hand and placed against it his flaming lips. And with a voice with bespoke past sorrow, and joy of union, and uncertainty of her reaction, he said,

"Fear me not, for I am the object of your plea. Be glad, for Peace has carried me back safely to you, and humanity has restored what greed essayed to take from us. Be not sad, but smile, my beloved. Do not express bewilderment, for Love has power that dispels Death; charm that conquers the enemy. I am your one. Think me not a spectre emerging from the House of Death to visit your Home of Beauty.

"Do not be frightened, for I am now Truth, spared from swords and fire to reveal to the people the triumph of Love over War. I am Word uttering introduction to the play of happiness and peace."

Then the young man became speechless and his tears spoke the language of the heart; and the angels of Joy hovered about that dwelling, and the two hearts restored the singleness which had been taken from them.

At dawn the two stood in the middle of the field contemplating the beauty of Nature injured by the tempest. After a deep and comforting silence, the soldier said to his sweetheart, "Look at the Darkness, giving birth to the Sun."

THE PLAYGROUND OF LIFE

One hour devoted to the pursuit of beauty and love is worth a full century of glory given by the frightened weak to the strong.

From that hour comes man's Truth; and during that century truth sleeps between the restless arms of disturbing dreams.

In that hour the soul sees for herself the natural law, and for that century she imprisons herself behind the law of man; and she is shackled with irons of oppression.

That hour was the inspiration of the Songs Of Solomon, and that century was the blind power which destroyed the temple of Baalbek.

That hour was the birth of the Sermon on the Mount, and that century wrecked the castles of Palmyra and the Tower of Babylon.

That hour was the Hegira of Mohammed and that century forgot Allah, Golgotha, and Sinai.

One hour devoted to mourning and lamenting the stolen equality of the weak is nobler than a century filled with greed and usurpation.

It is at that hour when the heart is purified by flaming sorrow and illuminated by the torch of love.

And in that century, desires for truth are buried in the bosom of the earth.

That hour is the root which must flourish.

That hour of meditation, the hour of prayer, and the hour of a new era of good.

And that century is a life of Nero spent on self−investment taken solely from earthly substance.

This is life.

Portrayed on the stage for ages; recorded earthly for centuries; lived in strangeness for years; sung as a hymn

for days; exalted but for an hour, but the hour is treasured by eternity as a jewel

THE CITY OF THE DEAD

Yesterday I drew myself from the noisome throngs and proceeded into the field until I reached a knoll upon which Nature had spread her comely garments. Now I could breathe.

I looked back, and the city appeared with its magnificent mosques and stately residences veiled by the smoke of the shops.

I commenced analyzing man's mission, but could conclude only that most of his life was identified with struggle and hardship. Then I tried not to ponder over what the sons of Adam had done, and centred my eyes on the field which is the throne of God's glory. In one secluded corner of the field I observed a burying ground surrounded by poplar trees.

There, between the city of the dead and the city of the living, I meditated. I thought of the eternal silence in the first and the endless sorrow in the second.

In the city of the living I found hope and despair; love and hatred, joy and sorrow, wealth and poverty, faith and infidelity.

In the city of the dead there is buried earth in earth that Nature converts, in the night's silence, into vegetation, and then into animal, and then into man. As my mind wandered in this fashion, I saw a procession moving slowly and reverently, accompanied by pieces of music that filled the sky with sad melody. It was an elaborate funeral. The dead was followed by the living who wept and lamented his going. As the cortege reached the place of interment the priests commenced praying and burning incense, and musicians blowing and plucking their instruments, mourning the departed. Then the leaders came forward one after the other and recited their eulogies with fine choice of words.

At last the multitude departed, leaving the dead resting in a most spacious and beautiful vault, expertly designed in stone and iron, and surrounded by the most expensively−entwined wreaths of flowers.

The farewell−bidders returned to the city and I remained, watching them from a distance and speaking softly to myself while the sun was descending to the horizon and Nature was making her many preparations for slumber.

Then I saw two men labouring under the weight of a wooden casket, and behind them a shabby−appearing woman carrying an infant on her arms. Following last was a dog who, with heartbreaking eyes, stared first at the woman and then at the casket.

It was a poor funeral. This guest of Death left to cold society a miserable wife and an infant to share her sorrows and a faithful dog whose heart knew of his companion's departure.

As they reached the burial place they deposited the casket into a ditch away from the tended shrubs and marble stones, and retreated after a few simple words to God. The dog made one last turn to look at his friend's grave as the small group disappeared behind the trees.

I looked at the city of the living and said to myself, "That place belongs to the few." Then I looked upon the trim city of the dead and said, "That place, too, belongs to the few. Oh Lord, where is the haven of all the people?"

As I said this, I looked toward the clouds, mingled with the sun's longest and most beautiful golden rays. And I heard a voice within me saying, "Over there!"

THE WIDOW AND HER SON

Night fell over North Lebanon and snow was covering the villages surrounded by the Kadeesha Valley, giving the fields and prairies the appearance of a great sheet of parchment upon which the furious Nature was recording her many deeds. Men came home from the streets while silence engulfed the night.

In a lone house near those villages lived a woman who sat by her fireside spinning wool, and at her side was her only child, staring now at the fire and then at his mother.

A terrible roar of thunder shook the house and the little boy shook with fright. He threw his arms about his mother, seeking protection from Nature in her affection. She took him to her bosom and kissed him; then she say him on her lap and said, "Do not fear, my son, for Nature is but comparing her great power to man's weakness. There is a Supreme Being beyond the falling snow and the heavy clouds and the blowing wind, and He knows the needs of the earth, for He made it; and He looks upon the weak with merciful eyes.

"Be brave, my boy. Nature smiles in Spring and laughs in Summer and yawns in Autumn, but now she is weeping; and with her tears she waters life, hidden under the earth.

"Sleep, my dear child; your father is viewing us from Eternity. The snow and thunder bring us closer to him at this time.

"Sleep, my beloved, for this white blanket which makes us cold, keeps the seeds warm, and these war−like things will produce beautiful flowers when Nisan comes.

"Thus, my child, man cannot reap love until after sad and revealing separation, and bitter patience, and desperate hardship. Sleep, my little boy; sweet dreams will find your soul who is unafraid of the terrible darkness of night and the biting frost."

The little boy looked upon his mother with sleep−laden eyes and said, "Mother, my eyes are heavy, but I cannot go to bed without saying my prayer."

The woman looked at his angelic face, her vision blurred by misted eyes, and said, "Repeat with me, my boy−−'God, have mercy on the poor and protect them from the winter; warm their thin−clad bodies with Thy merciful hands; look upon the orphans who are sleeping in wretched houses, suffering from hunger and cold. Hear, oh Lord, the call of widows who are helpless and shivering with fear for their young. Open, oh Lord, the hearts of all humans, that they may see the misery of the weak. Have mercy upon the sufferers who knock on doors, and lead the wayfarers into warm places. Watch, oh Lord, over the little birds and protect the trees and fields from the anger of the storm; for Thou art merciful and full of love.'"

As Slumber captured the boy's spirit, his mother placed him in the bed and kissed his eyes with quivering lips. Then she went back and sat by the hearth, spinning the wool to make him raiment.

SONG OF THE SOUL

In the depth of my soul there is a wordless song A song that lives in the seed of my heart. It refuses to melt with ink on parchment; It engulfs my affection in a transparent cloak And flows but not upon my lips.

How can I sigh it? I fear it may mingle with earthly ether; To whom shall I sing it? It dwells in the house of my soul, In fear of harsh ears.

When I look into my inner eyes I see the shadow of its shadow; When I touch my fingertips I feel its vibrations.

The deeds of my hands heed its presence as a lake must reflect the glittering stars; My tears reveal it, as bright drops of dew reveal the secret of a withering rose.

It is a song composed by contemplation, And published by silence, And shunned by clamour, And folded by truth, And repeated by dreams, And understood by love, And hidden by awakening, And sung by the soul.

It is the song of love; What Cain or Esau could sing it?

It is more fragrant than jasmine; What voice could enslave it?

It is heartbound, as a virgin's secret; What string could quiver it?

Who dares unite the roar of the sea And the singing of the nightingale? Who dares compare the shrieking tempest To the sigh of an infant? Who dares speak aloud the words Intended for the heart to speak? What human dares sing in voice The song of God?

SONG OF THE FLOWER

I am a kind word uttered and repeated by the voice of nature; I am a star fallen from the blue tent upon the green carpet. I am the daughter of the elements with whom winter conceived; To whom Spring gave birth; I was reared in the lap of Summer and I slept in the bed of Autumn.

At dawn I unite with the breeze to announce the coming of light; At eventide I join the birds in bidding the light farewell.

The plains are decorated with my beautiful colours, And the air is scented with my fragrance.

As I embrace slumber the eyes of night watch over me, And as I awaken I stare at the sun, Which is the only eye of the day.

I drink dew for wine, and harken to the voices of the birds, And dance to the rhythmic swaying of the grass.

I am the lover's gift; I am the wedding wreath; I am the memory of a moment of happiness; I am the last gift of the living to the dead; I am a part of joy and a part of sorrow.

But I look up high to see only the light, And never look down to see my shadow. This is wisdom which man must learn.

SONG OF LOVE

I am the lover's eyes, and the spirit's wine, and the heart's nourishment. I am a rose. My heart opens at dawn and the virgin kisses me and places me upon her breast.

I am the house of true fortune, and the origin of pleasure, and the beginning of peace and tranquillity. I am the

gentle smile upon his lips of beauty. When youth overtakes me he forgets his toil, And his whole life becomes reality of sweet dreams.

I am the poet's elation, And the artist's revelation, And the musician's inspiration.

I am a sacred shrine in the heart of a child, adored by a merciful mother.

I appear to a heart's cry; I shun a demand; My fullness pursues the heart's desire; It shuns the empty claim of the voice.

I appeared to Adam through Eve And exile was his lot; Yet I revealed myself to Solomon, and he drew wisdom from my presence.

I smiled at Helena and she destroyed Tarwada; Yet I crowned Cleopatra and peace dominated the Valley of the Nile.

I am like the ages−−building today and destroying tomorrow; I am like a god, who creates and ruins; I am sweeter than a violet's sigh; I am more violent than a raging tempest.

Gifts alone do not entice me; Parting does not discourage me; Poverty does not chase me; Jealousy does not prove my awareness; Madness does not evidence my presence.

Oh seekers, I am Truth, beseeching Truth; And your Truth in seeking and receiving And protecting me shall determine my behaviour.

SONG OF MAN

I was here from the moment of the beginning, and here I am still. And I shall remain here until the end of the world, For there is no ending to my grief−stricken being.

I roamed the infinite sky, and soared in the ideal world, and floated through the firmament. But here I am, prisoner of measurement.

I heard the teachings of Confucius; I listened to Brahma's wisdom; I sat by Buddha under the Tree of Knowledge. Yet here I am, existing with ignorance and heresy.

I was on Sinai when Jehovah approached Moses; I saw the Nazarene's miracles at the Jordan; I was in Medina when Mohammed visited. Yet I here I am, prisoner of bewilderment.

Then I witnessed the might of Babylon; I learned of the glory of Egypt; I viewed the warring greatness of Rome. Yet my earlier teachings showed the weakness and sorrow of those achievements.

I conversed with the magicians of Ain Dour; I debated with the priests of Assyria; I gleaned depth from the prophets of Palestine. Yet, I am still seeking truth.

I gathered wisdom from quiet India; I probed the antiquity of Arabia; I heard all that can be heard. Yet, my heart is deaf and blind.

I suffered at the hands of despotic rulers; I suffered slavery under insane invaders; I suffered hunger imposed by tyranny; Yet, I still possess some inner power with which I struggle to greet each day.

My mind is filled, but my heart is empty; My body is old, but my heart is an infant. Perhaps in youth my heart will grow, But I pray to grow old and reach the moment of my return to God. Only then will my heart fill!

I was here from the moment of the beginning, and here I am still. And I shall remain here until the end ff world, For there is no ending to my grief−stricken being.

BEFORE THE THRONE OF BEAUTY

One heavy day I ran away from the grim face of society and the dizzying clamour of the city and directed my weary step to the spacious alley. I pursued the beckoning course of the rivulet and the musical sounds of the birds until I reached a lonely spot where the flowing branches of the trees prevented the sun from the touching the earth.

I stood there, and it was entertaining to my soul−−my thirsty soul who had seen naught but the mirage of life instead of its sweetness.

I was engrossed deeply in thought and my spirits were sailing the firmament when a hour, wearing a sprig of grapevine that covered part of her naked body, and a wreath of poppies about her golden hair, suddenly appeared to me. As she realized my astonishment, she greeted me saying, "Fear me not; I am the Nymph of the Jungle."

"How can beauty like yours be committed to live in this place? Please tell me who your are, and whence you come?" I asked. She sat gracefully on the green grass and responded, "I am the symbol of nature! I am the ever virgin your forefathers worshipped, and to my honour they erected shrines and temples at Baalbek and Jbeil." And I dared say, "But those temples and shrines were laid waste and the bones of my adoring ancestors became a part of the earth; nothing was left to commemorate their goddess save a pitiful few and the forgotten pages in the book of history."

She replied, "Some goddesses live in the lives of their worshippers and die in their deaths, while some live an eternal and infinite life. My life is sustained by the world of beauty which you will see where ever you rest your eyes, and this beauty is nature itself; it is the beginning of the shepherds joy among the hills, and a villagers happiness in the fields, and the pleasure of the awe filled tribes between the mountains and the plains. This Beauty promotes the wise into the throne the truth."

Then I said, "Beauty is a terrible power!" And she retorted, "Human beings fear all things, even yourselves. You fear heaven, the source of spiritual peace; you fear nature, the haven of rest and tranquillity; you fear the God of goodness and accuse him of anger, while he is full of love and mercy."

After a deep silence, mingled with sweet dreams, I asked, "Speak to me of that beauty which the people interpret and define, each one according to his own conception; I have seen her honoured and worshipped in different ways and manners."

She answered, "Beauty is that which attracts your soul, and that which loves to give and not to receive. When you meet Beauty, you feel that the hands deep within your inner self are stretched forth to bring her into the domain of your heart. It is the magnificence combined of sorrow and joy; it is the Unseen which you see, and the Vague which you understand, and the Mute which you hear−−it is the Holy of Holies that begins in yourself and ends vastly beyond your earthly imagination."

Then the Nymph of the Jungle approached me and laid her scented hands upon my eyes. And as she withdrew, I found me alone in the valley. When I returned to the city, whose turbulence no longer vexed me, I

repeated her words:

"Beauty is that which attracts your soul, and that which loves to give and not to receive."

A LOVER'S CALL

Where are you, my beloved? Are you in that little paradise, watering the flowers who look upon you as infants look upon the breast of their mothers?

Or are you in your chamber where the shrine of virtue has been placed in your honour, and upon which you offer my heart and soul as sacrifice?

Or amongst the books, seeking human knowledge, while you are replete with heavenly wisdom?

Oh companion of my soul, where are you? Are you praying in the temple? Or calling Nature in the field, haven of your dreams?

Are you in the huts of the poor, consoling the broken−hearted with the sweetness of your soul, and filling their hands with your bounty?

You are God's spirit everywhere; you are stronger than the ages.

Do you have memory of the day we met, when the halo of your spirit surrounded us, and the Angels of Love floated about, singing the praise of the soul's deed?

Do you recollect our sitting in the shade of the branches, sheltering ourselves from humanity, as the ribs protect the divine secret of the heart from injury?

Remember you the trails and forest we walked, with hands joined, and our heads leaning against each other, as if we were hiding ourselves within ourselves?

Recall you the hour I bade you farewell, and the maritime kiss you placed on my lips? That kiss taught me that joining of lips in love reveals heavenly secrets which the tongue cannot utter!

That kiss was introduction to a great sigh, like the Almighty's breath that turned earth into man.

That sigh led my way into the spiritual world announcing the glory of my soul; and there it shall perpetuate until again we meet.

I remember when you kissed me and kissed me, with tears coursing your cheeks, and you said, "earthly bodies must often separate for earthly purpose, and must live apart impelled by worldly intent.

"But the spirit remains joined safely in the hands of love, until death arrives and takes joined souls to God.

"Go, my beloved; love has chosen you her delegate; over her, for she is beauty who offers to her follower the cup of the sweetness of life. as for my own empty arms, your love shall remain my comforting groom; you memory, my eternal wedding."

Where are you now, my other self? Are you awake in the silence of the night? Let the clean breeze convey to you my heart's every beat and affection.

Are you fondling my face in your memory? That image is no longer my own, for sorrow has dropped his shadow on my happy countenance of the past.

Sobs have withered my eyes which reflected your beauty and dried my lips which you sweetened with kisses.

Where are you, my beloved? Do you hear my weeping from beyond the ocean? Do you understand my need? Do you know the greatness of my patience?

Is there any spirit in the air capable of conveying to you the breath of this dying youth? Is there any secret communication between angels that will carry to you my complaint?

Where are you, my beautiful star? The obscurity of life has cast me upon its bosom; sorrow has conquered me.

Sail your smile into the air; it will reach and enliven me! breathe your fragrance into the air; it will sustain me!

Where are you, my beloved?

Oh, how great is Love!

And how little am I!

THE PALACE AND THE HUT

Part One

As night fell and the light glittered in the great house, the servants stood at the massive door awaiting the coming of the guests; and upon their velvet garments shown golden buttons.

The magnificent carriages drew into the palace park and the nobles entered, dressed in gorgeous raiment and decorated with jewels. The instruments filled the air with pleasant melodies while the dignitaries danced to the soothing music.

At midnight the finest and most palatable foods were served on a beautiful table embellished with all kinds of the rarest flowers. The feasters dined and drank abundantly, until the sequence of the wine began to play its part. At dawn the throng dispersed boisterously, after spending a long night of intoxication and gluttony which hurried their worn bodies into their deep beds with unnatural sleep.

Part Two

At eventide, a man attired in the dress of heavy work stood before the door of his small house and knocked at the door. As it opened, he entered and greeted the occupants in a cheerful manner, and then sat between his children who were playing at the fireplace. In a short time, his wife had the meal prepared and they sat at a wooden table consuming their food. After eating they gathered around the oil lamp and talked of the day's events. When the early night had lapsed, all stood silently and surrendered themselves to the King of Slumber with a song of praise and a prayer of gratitude on their lips.